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Approved For Release 2000/08/04 : CIA-RDP82-00357R000900090005-3

Personal Evaluation System

3 September 1971

Bob --

Attached are some factors that [REDACTED] and I have put together for possible consideration in your Career Board meeting. There is nothing sacred about this list, and anyone could come up with other sets of their own. For example, the Gap Sheet contains another set that I felt was relevant to the determination of personal and managerial skills that should be maintained at a strong level by SP careerists with potential for further development. 25X1A9a

I would urge caution in settling upon a limited number of appraisal elements, with numeric values, in order to rank individuals as the basis for making key decisions governing their welfare -- promotions, assignments, training, or separations.

Admittedly, subjective judgments are often prone to error. Although it is relatively easy to reach a consensus among supervisors or Career Board members as to the best employees and the worst employees, it is difficult to rely upon general impressions as the basis for preferring one individual over another or rating a number of employees in a numerical sequence. Individual favoritism and ignorance of individual talents are only two of the problems that arise when no attempt is made to systematically consider the talents and shortcomings of all individuals similarly affected in an evaluation exercise. I can appreciate that this problem is particularly a grievous one to the boss who must rely upon the judgments of supervisors or Career Board members especially if he is not a participant in the proceedings.

Notwithstanding the imperfections and shortcomings of subjective judgments, I believe there is a greater potential for harm in attaching undue significance to nominal differences in numeric rankings. As in the case of subjective evaluations, I believe it is possible to make a distinction between the better and the poorer employees, perhaps within the upper 10% and the lower 10%. But to hand off promotions or separations on the strength of minute differences in scores, can be more arbitrary than relying on subjective judgments. Such a system can very easily be a precise way of arriving at imprecise judgments. Scoring a sheet of appraisal elements with stipulated numerical values is a simple task but ascribing numeric values to appraisal elements and determining which of many appraisal elements should be used are subjective actions. Moreover, what applies to one group of people within our office might not apply to another. I think it might be possible to assign numerical values to typing speed or stenographic ability for clerical personnel, just as Commo considers speed in evaluating CTR's; but I doubt if this approach would be effective in judging between personnel assistants.

Although OC still uses the evaluation system, NPIC and the Office of Security have abandoned their programs of ranking personnel according to appraisal elements with arithmetical values. It is my understanding NPIC

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discontinued its program in part because it was spending too much time coming up with point totals that weren't really too meaningful. The Office of Security gave up its program four or five years ago because it was taking a long time to produce unreliable results. I understand officials in OS often fought over point totals and then promoted whomever they were interested in.

Notwithstanding the comments above, I believe there is merit in the OP Career Board and Panels systematically and periodically looking at individuals in accordance with recognized guidelines. Systematic application of guidelines should enhance the reliability of the final judgments rendered by the promotion panels. I think it would be worthwhile for the SP Career Board to pass on to the Panels an agreed upon set of factors which seem generally applicable to their consideration of individual promotions and assignments. I believe that the Panels should be instructed to critically examine what additional factors, if any, would be pertinent to the consideration of careerists at the grade levels under their jurisdiction.

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Chief, Plans Staff

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